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Stronger Voice for Reporters

Gripping by reporters is as endemic to the newspaper business as deadlines. Whenever newsmen get together, chances are they will complain about being underpaid or overcredited, or both. Lately, some reporters in the U.S. have been showing signs of more organized dissatisfaction about other issues. They are following a European trend (TIME, Jan. 19) and seeking a bigger voice in how their papers are run. Items:

► Under a new Newspaper Guild contract at the *Denver Post*, three reporters will meet monthly in committee with three members of management to discuss questions of publishing ethics. (One grievance the reporters plan to raise is the assignment of so-called puff pieces to support ads in special sections.) Some young reporters are skeptical of the committee's effectiveness. With staffers from the *Rocky Mountain News*, they are trying to start their own watchdog journal, along the lines of the *Chicago Journalism Review*.

► At the *Rochester Times-Union* and the *Democrat and Chronicle*, both owned by the Gannett Company, re-

porters, copy editors and photographers started taking turns this year sitting in as policy-making members of the editorial board. Says Executive Vice President Al Neuharth: "We believe control of policy should be in the bosses' hands because that's where the ultimate responsibility lies. But we also feel journalists at every level should be encouraged to contribute their best talents and ideas."

► At the *Minneapolis Tribune*, a group of reporters organized themselves in February "to promote quality journalism," held some 20 meetings in their homes and exchanged thoughts one Saturday morning at the press club with *Tribune* President John Cowles Jr., Executive Editor Bower Hawthorne and Managing Editor Wallace Allen. Cowles agreed that the paper needed more rapport with young readers, though he challenged one reporter's notion that Bob Dylan is as important to this generation as Charles Lindbergh was to his. Other results: follow-up discussions between top editors and individual staffers, and a questionnaire from Allen seeking details of specific complaints.

► At the *New York Post*, most of the editorial staff signed a petition last September seeking closer communication between the newsroom and Dorothy Schiff, publisher and editor in chief. Mrs. Schiff began weekly meetings with representative groups the next month. Among staff suggestions already acted upon: more attention to the black community, and youth activities, including the assigning of a full-time rock music critic, and the appointment of a "futures" editor to plan some stories further ahead, enabling reporters to do more research.

Reporters are stirring collectively at other U.S. papers, most notably at the *New York Times*. More than 30 *Times* staffers, including top reporters and critics, gathered privately one recent Sunday afternoon to discuss morale and swap complaints. Managing Editor A.M. Rosenthal says that no formal committee exists, and he has received no demands. But smaller meetings are continuing, and some approach to management is in the offing. One likely pitch: that the *Times* editors are out of touch with some groups, particularly students and blacks, and that their judgment about stories about those groups is sometimes uninformed. As a result, say these reporters, even the *Times*' extensive coverage may not be adequate. "What we need," says one, "is more direct relations with the editors who run the paper."